North Dakota School for the Deaf
Future Services Plan (FSP) Transition Team
Meeting #3

Thursday, December 17, 2009
Devils Lake, ND
Suggested edits are highlighted in blue.

Pre-meeting Activities

The meeting was preceded on Wednesday, December 16, 2009, by a networking and socialization opportunity at the home of the Superintendent of the ND School for the Deaf.

The Transition and Planning Team members participated in a tour of the campus of the ND School for the Deaf on Thursday, December 17, 2009, prior to the beginning of the actual Transition Team Meeting.

Meeting Summary

Meeting Goals

- To review and affirm the foundational structure and process for the NDSD Future Services Plan (FSP) Initiative –
  - Use of the consensus-based decision-making process;
  - Operational ground rules and values;
  - Purpose, goals, and expected outcomes of the Future Services Plan Initiative; and
  - General "housekeeping" issues.
- To review, discuss and approve the draft Transition Team Meeting Summary from November 19, 2009;
- To review and discuss the results of the FSP Progressive Survey;
- To review and discuss public input and comments;
- To receive informational presentations regarding components of the educational and service delivery systems for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing in North Dakota;
- To identify and clarify the challenges, expected outcomes and activities necessary to develop North Dakota's Future Services Plan for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing; and
- To identify additional research, data, educational materials, information and presentations needed, and next steps in the Future Services Plan initiative.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

Participants

Carol Lybeck, Fred Bott, Cindy Wetzel, David Oehlke, Diane Rice, Connie Hovendick, Holly Pedersen, Terry Solheim, James Johnson, Michelle Rolewitz, Larry Robinson and Cynthia Tastad.

Unable to Attend

Nancy McKenzie.

Resource Staff/Planning Team Attending

Nancy Skorheim, Gary Gronberg and Carmen Grove Suminski (Bob Rutten was not able to attend).

Interpreters

Melissa Brekke and Cathy Obregon.

Working Draft

Facilitated by
The Consensus Council, Inc.

Welcome and Introductions
The participants were welcomed and Transition Team members and staff provided self-introductions. It was noted that Dr. Sanstead has appointed Nancy McKenzie, Director of the Regional Human Service Centers and Vocational Rehabilitation, as a team member. She will be replacing both Helen Baumgartner and Mike Beck. The reason for this adjustment is based on her expanded capacity to represent a broader constituency in the adult profile. Ms. McKenzie's contact information can be accessed from the revised Transition Team Membership and Contact Information document.

Several individuals were present and their role strictly as observers was explained. They were advised that there would be time for them to share any input they have prior to the conclusion of the meeting.

Foundational Structure and Process Review
Transition Team members reviewed and affirmed the consensus-based decision-making process and the established ground rules including:

- It's your show/opportunity.
- Everyone is equal.
- No relevant topic is excluded.
- No discussion is ended.
- Respect opinions.
- Respect the time.
- Keep the facilitator accurate.
- Non-attribution.
- Silence is agreement.
- Media/open meeting.
- Have fun!

Participants also reviewed and affirmed the group's values including the revision that had been suggested and drafted from the previous meeting:

- The focus will be on the people who need/receive/use the services.
- Services will be of the highest quality – the "best."
- The plan/services will be need-driven, responsive and flexible.
- All activities and recommendations will reflect a leadership role that is current, and creative.
- Related laws and regulations will be identified and respected.
- Fiscal responsibility and good stewardship will be stressed.
- Efforts will reflect a broad focus and the inclusion of all deaf/HH programs in the state.
- Services should be available and accessible to all individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- The process will reflect a comprehensive approach to the needs of adults who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Recommendations will be based on a continuum of services for all individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing from infancy to old age.

The participants were provided with an orientation to the meeting materials, and the draft agenda (#1) was reviewed and accepted as presented.

Working Draft

The draft meeting summary from the November 19, 2009, (#2) and the previously supplied edits (#3) were reviewed. No additional recommendations for changes were identified or requested, and the current iterations will be posted to the website as the approved final summary. The process for developing, reviewing, posting and approving a final summary for each meeting was discussed and the participants agreed to continue utilizing this process for future meetings:

> *The Consensus Council as soon as possible following each meeting, will complete a draft meeting summary. This initial draft will be distributed to all of the Transition Team members who will be asked to supply any suggested edits or corrections focused on any gross errors or omissions (utilizing the "reply all" option) to the Consensus Council within a two-day timeframe. The Consensus Council will edit the draft based on the feedback from the Transition Team and a "corrected iteration" will then be posted as a draft on the website. The Transition Team will finalize the draft during its next meeting. The goal of this process is to have an accurate draft of the meeting summary posted for all interested parties within 7 to 10 days of each meeting.*

Review and Discussion of Public Input and Comments

The process for public input and comment was reviewed. It was noted that a number of email comments have been received through the website. These comments have been edited for identifying information and passed on to the Transition Team members for their review and reference. To date, no public input has been received directly through the meeting(s). The Transition Team members' role in representing their specific constituencies and the public was discussed and Team members were encouraged to share any input that they have received and/or any observations that they have made. The identified and discussed the following:

- A comment from a 12/13/09 email regarding the need to improve the process for deaf and hard of hearing students as they initiate and move through their planning and service process with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) generated a significant discussion and it was noted that often, the VR counselors are not experienced or adequately aware of the specialized needs of deaf students. On the other side, deaf students are not always aware of their needs and the services available to them, so they do not advocate well for themselves. There was no intention to blame anyone or be overly critical of services, but it was suggested that attention should be paid to educating and empowering deaf and hard of hearing students (including having peer or advocate assistance as they move into and through this process) and a suggestion that VR counselors could be provided with additional training to improve their understanding of deafness, hearing loss and deaf culture.
- It was pointed out that because of the "low incidence" of deaf and hard of hearing students in the overall spectrum of VR services it may not be possible or practical to have all VR personnel be experts, but a basic training and understanding of deaf culture (101 course) would be helpful. Additionally, it was suggested the NDSD may be appropriate to fulfill a vital role in its potential capacity as an expanded resource center, and that the director of Vocational Rehabilitation is now a member of this team and will be a great resource to the group as this issue is discussed and addressed further.
- It was observed that a broad theme of the emails is that folks having had access to the outreach program value the services they have received (highly).
- Comments received through the feedback process suggest that the public is not aware of the extent of services available (i.e. requirements for a transition plan) and therefore cannot or have not accessed them. Concerns were discussed about the need to respond or reply to the email to provide up-to-date information. The participants agreed to continue to follow the policy of not responding specifically to the comments, but making information available through the use of the website, summaries, and encouraging direct

Working Draft

contact with Transition Team members and service providers, and that the issue of misinformation and lack of information be addressed specifically in the plan.

- Throughout the process, the Transition Team should be mindful of and identify any legislative action(s) necessary to address and mitigate problems, issues and concerns regarding the system and the implementation of the plan.
- Problems accessing services and dealing with problems are often knowledge-based. A key factor is often the parents, providers and students are not even aware that they don't have the information that they need … they don't know what they don't know.
- Parents, especially, are often placed in a difficult situation because of their lack of knowledge. They lack experience and knowledge and find themselves accepting (often without question) the advice and recommendations of the professionals. They are not able to ask the right questions or adequately advocate for their child.
- The role of NDSD as a statewide resource office was repeatedly raised and suggested by various Transition Team members. It was suggested that NDSD's role could be strengthened and expanded in a variety of ways, including taking advantage of available and developing technology.
- The apparent rift between educational philosophies within the deaf culture was pointed out in the context of one of the emailers describing the abuse and insults they endured from parents of other deaf children as they struggled to make the best decisions they could for their child. It was agreed that opinions can be very strong, and everyone is entitled to theirs, but there must be flexibility and acceptance – even if there is disagreement. Consistent with this, the history of the introduction and use of hearing aids was reviewed. It was noted that initially, there was great resistance to their use, but gradually, with time, the opinions changes and acceptance grew. It takes time to change.
- The team members discussed a number of issues surrounding the availability of and acceptance of American Sign Language (ASL). The points ranged from the desire to have ASL training available in all North Dakota schools through the acceptance of ASL as a foreign language when deaf and hard of hearing students apply for college. Opinions varied on this, but it was apparent that the members were interested in further discussion and clarification.
- A request was made for an inventory of current and potential outreach services provided through NDSD. It was noted that Carol Lybeck is the coordinator of Outreach Services at the school and has a presentation planned for later in the meeting (this was later postponed until the January meeting and Ms. Lybeck agreed to develop a draft outline for use in that presentation).
- The system for the training and certification of interpreters was discussed and the critical importance of well-trained, qualified interpreters (especially in the early years of language development) was stressed. Currently, although requirements are standardized, there is no oversight or ongoing follow-up or assessment of interpreters by any specific body in the state. The differences between "qualified" and "certified" were noted, as was the distinction between "signing" and "interpreting." Shortages of certified interpreters were discussed with the "low incidence" factor, rural and other demographic issues, and difficulties of assuring consistent, high-quality services being cited as consequential points. The team indicated that they wanted to address this issue as the process moved ahead.
- The question of how families are taught to communicate with their children was raised. It was explained that as much as possible, these services are flexible, individualized and addressed on a local basis with the provision of NDSD services. Services may be provided through family classes and training or individual sessions. When and how this is done depends a great deal on the specific situation and the willingness and acceptance of each family.

Working Draft

- Services available to deaf and hard of hearing students entering and engaging the higher education system were reviewed. Although adequate services are available or can be arranged on many campuses, there are gaps and service deficiencies that tend to limit a students choices and options. The differences between the requirements of IDEA (governing education and services prior to high school graduation) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA – governing what is required and provided for adults) were discussed and the Team members agreed that a more comprehensive, proactive approach should be explored.
- The participants discussed the need to be open and agreed that the availability of options and choices is critical. They agreed that there is value in all options.

Informational Presentations

NDSD Site Plan Update – Carmen Grove Suminski, Superintendent, ND School for the Deaf, North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind, provided the participants with an overview of the current efforts underway to address the projected/potential options and plans for NDSD facilities.

- There is a Master Plan for the NDSD facilities. A committee developed the initial plan and continues to work on it. It is reviewed and updated regularly. The plan includes specific steps that are recommended as well as ideas and suggestions for exploring the effective/efficient utilization of all campus property and facilities.
- Efforts have been underway to renovate and lease the Vocational Center/Trades Building. This effort has progressed to the point where several interested parties have been identified and their offers/proposals are being considered. However, at this time, due to the other processes that are in motion (including the Transition Team), a decision has been made to "hold" on this process for the next several months. In the meantime, a decision will be made regarding whether or not a general renovation and retrofitting of the facility will be initiated (funds have been appropriated by the legislature for this purpose). This would be the basic work necessary (white box) that would be required by any potential occupant.
- A request for qualification has been distributed to secure an architectural firm to do a review and assessment of the Campus Master Plan. This review ($41,000 appropriated by the legislature) will provide a professional overview of the plan and provide recommendations on facilities use to the school's administration. This process is expected to be completed in the spring (2010) and may become an integral part of the Future Services Plan.

Ms. Suminski distributed a document that outlined the current use of all of the buildings on campus and it was noted that most of the campus facilities are being used, with the exception of the Vocational Center/Trades Building. It was noted that the Head Start program has an interest in additional space and there are ongoing contacts with the Devils Lake Park Board to consider expanded use of campus assets. At this point, the Team members noted that the legislative appropriations for the NDSD obviously are used for more activities than just the education of deaf and hard of hearing students. As a result of the successful efforts of the NDSD staff and administration, service components and costs are fragmented and the line has become blurred between the cost of educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing and many of the other activities (including outreach) that occur at and through the school. Transition Team members made the following requests:

- That, to the extent possible, the school's administration provide a clear breakdown of the school's appropriations, income and specific cost centers.

Working Draft

- That such a breakdown include the "true" cost of "instruction" for students at the school and those who may be mainstreamed with the specific costs of residential services, transportation and food costs identified separately.
- That comparative costs from other states be included in this breakdown. It was noted that these figures were provided to the Team members in previous handouts and it was agreed that they be "pulled" from the earlier documents and included in the response to these requests.

IDEA 2004 – Unique Factors Relating to School Age Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing - Nancy Skorheim, Regional Coordinator, ND Department of Public Instruction/Office of Special Education, provided the group with an overview of some of the unique factors and requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Ms. Skorheim noted that Bob Rutten's presentation at the November meeting covered the general principles and requirements of the act and she referenced the *"Meeting the Needs of Students Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing"* guide (bluebook), and the DPI informational paper, *"Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in North Dakota Schools,"* both were distributed to Team members at the November meeting.
Key point of the presentation included:

- This is a world of alphabet soup, where acronyms and abbreviations are used constantly. To understand the processes, people need to know what the acronyms and abbreviations mean. There is a helpful glossary in the bluebook beginning on page 83.
- It is critical to identify children with a hearing impairment early. To that end, the Child Find effort supports newborn hearing screenings. It was reported that North Dakota has no mandatory screening process and currently provides no funding for these services. Child Find has provided screening equipment and all of North Dakota's birthing hospitals do voluntary screenings. North Dakota currently screens 97% of newborns, and that is above the national average. However, the equipment that is being used is 15+ years old and is in need of replacement and there are no funds available for this.
- Other screening and identification processes are also employed to help identify children with hearing impairments. These include
    - Public school screenings at the kindergarten, grade one and grade two levels;
    - Reports by private audiologists;
    - Observations and screenings by outreach and early intervention staff;
    - Classroom teachers; and
    - Parents.

    It was noted that private and home schools are not obligated to provide screenings, but all services available to public school students are available to students in these settings.
- The participants were told that a law still exists that requires the reporting of a child with a hearing impairment to the superintendent of the NDSD, but this is not practiced or enforced any longer.
- Evaluation procedures require the involvement of "trained, knowledgeable personnel," and have specific requirements and standards that reflect deference to culture (deaf), race and language (of the child/student being assessed).
- The development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) by a team made up of "knowledgeable" or "expert" individuals is required (several of the Team Members shared that, in practice, the level of knowledge and expertise of IEP teams varies widely).
- The IEP team must take into account/consideration any:
    - "Special factors" related to the deaf or hard of hearing child;
    - "Related services" that are required or necessary to benefit or support the student;
    - "Accommodations and adaptations;" and
    - "Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)" requirements.

Working Draft

- The Least Restrictive Environment must be considered to the maximum extent possible within an array or continuum of services. It must, also, be evaluated with regard to the potential of any harmful effects upon the child/student.

The Team members noted that:

- Accommodations and other related services often have a compound benefit on children/students with other types of disabilities.
- A dispute resolution process is in place and available if a parent has a disagreement that cannot be resolved through the team process. It was agreed that the intentions of the IEP members are positive and that most problems relate to resource or communications issues.
- *NDDPI does monitor districts for compliance on IEPs and each special education unit/school district must have a monitoring process in place.* Although unit level reports are required and provided to the DPI, there is no specific "quality control" process in place regarding the make-up or performance of IEP teams, or the actual follow through and consistency (performance) on IEPs once they are initiated. This results in a great deal of variability from team to team and IEP to IEP. The Team members agreed that it is critical to make certain that the "right" personnel are on the IEP team from the very beginning.
- The quality of interpreters and teachers is critical (identified and discussed in the November meeting). Because of their importance as a role model, their key role in language development and the implications that their impact has on a child's future, who and how interpreters are certified continues to be a topic of concern. The North Dakota Association of the Deaf has tried to address this issue as it relates to qualified vs. certified through legislative action, but there is not a process for enforcement or follow-up once certification is granted.
- Issues and concerns related to LRE tend to be relative to the situation. The Bismarck School district has been both praised and criticized for their approach of "centralized mainstreaming."

Services to School Age Children

- Statewide – Nancy Skorheim, Coordinator/Special Education ND Department of Public Instruction, provided the participants with the result (several handouts) of her efforts to gather the statistical data requested by the Transition Team at the last meeting. These materials included:
    - The numbers of deaf and hard of hearing students (by age) and the number of deaf education teachers in each of the eight (8) established Human Resource Center regions of the state.
    - The "Child Count" numbers (identified by primary disability and shared with Team members through an earlier PowerPoint presentation and accompanying handout).
    - The compilation of data from the MIS 03 Form.
    - The results of the "quick survey" that was completed with the special education directors identifying students who have hearing loss as a secondary diagnosis or who have an identified hearing loss, but do not require an IEP.
        - *The Child Count numbers are those for 2008.*
        - *NDSD Students are included in the count, but it in a separate column.*
        - *There is no distinction between deaf education teachers who are actively teaching and any of them who are deaf education qualified, but not teaching, and NDSD outreach staff and teachers are not included in the count.*
        - *0 to 3 years are not included in the numbers. However, these numbers are collected by the Dept. of Human Services*

Working Draft

- *There are 31 special education districts (they do not conform to the eight (8) regions of the state). Of that number only 20 responded to the survey.*
- *The special education districts do not normally keep portions of the data provided, therefore, some of these numbers are estimates.*

- With regard to these materials she noted that the Child Count numbers are gathered as of December 1 of each year and the 2009 figures will be available soon.
- Team members were advised that the current census at the NDSD did not change much with 25 students predicted for the beginning of 2010.
- Questions were raised regarding the accuracy of the numbers and it was noted that there are concerns and issues with regard to clarification of the terminology and definitions used for "speech and language" vs. "hearing impairment." The primary and secondary diagnoses are expected to be correct in the context of the development of an Individualized Education Program(IEP), and the other numbers should be considered correct.
- A question was asked regarding how and who makes the determination/decision to place a student at NDSD with the response that it generally flows through the IEP Team and that process. Team Members reported that the determination varies with the make-up and capability of the team and should be based on the student's needs with the parents having the final say. NDDPI cannot challenge an IEP decision, but does monitor the process and responds to requests for dispute resolution. This, again, emphasized the importance of the IEP Team and the need to have the "right" people on the team from the beginning.
- In the ensuing discussion the following points were made:
  - Although situations and circumstances vary, parents are key to the decision-making process, and the better informed and more accepting they are, the more positively they will affect the services and decisions
  - In some cases it would be very appropriate and helpful to have an advocate present at IEP meetings, but it is not necessary in all cases. The most important components of a successful IEP process/plan are to have informed parents and team members that are knowledgeable, experienced and supportive. This would include a positive attitude and approach (My/This child can be successful).
  - It is important to ensure that there are real options, opportunities for choice and services that are accessible on a consistent basis, not just when it's "cheap and easy."
  - There should be true options. No parent should be presented with an "either or" situation. We should not be willing to give up on trying to offer "the" options.
  - Hearing parents need to be educated on and in touch with deaf culture to be able to understand and support their child, and address the options and choices presented.

The participants observed that:

- 120 students carry a primary diagnosis of "Hearing Impaired."
- 24 additional students carry a secondary diagnosis of "Hearing Impaired."
- 120 students are listed as "Hearing Impaired" but not requiring an IEP.

The Team members asked Ms. Skorheim to continue her efforts to collect and organize the data from the special education districts (especially the 11 that have not yet responded). In addition, the group would like to have an updated Child Count spreadsheet as soon as those 2009 numbers become available. These updates will be included in the agenda for the January meeting.

Working Draft

History of the NDSD – Lilia Bakken, Communications Director, North Dakota State School for the Deaf, provided the participants with a presentation on the history of the NDSD – the past 120 years. Ms. Bakken gave the group a superintendent-by–superintendent review that included their accomplishments, pictures, and an identification of the educational approach(es) endorsed and promoted by each of the school's former (and the current) administrations. Ms. Bakken pointed out that "historically, there has been no consensus or consistency in the identified and accepted teaching approaches." Note: The Team members have previously been provided with a copy of the "Centennial Issue of the North Dakota School for the Deaf Banner" – circa June 1990 - that provides additional materials that will supplement the presentation.

Due to time constraints, the presentations on **NDSD Services**, **NDSD Outreach Services**, and the **Report on the Midwest Conference** will be rescheduled to the January meeting.

Transition Team Feedback and Discussion
The Team members reviewed their discussion from the previous meeting and determined that it was not necessary to schedule a meeting in Grand Forks. They requested that the Planning Team facilitate a presentation on the North Dakota Vision Services and the School for the Blind model at a future meeting, but agreed that the January meeting should be scheduled and held in Bismarck.

Transition Team Progressive Survey
Transition Team members were asked to complete and "hand in" the progressive survey form.

Summary Comments
Transition Team members provided the following summary comments:

- The tour was enjoyable and a good idea. Even though I work at the school it was informative. We are reaching a point where we need to move on.
- We have a big challenge ahead of us. We need a well organized approach that will help us to move forward in the time we have, and "get it all in."
- I'm feeling a bit overwhelmed. We have been receiving a great deal of information and we have a lot to do. The plan will have to be strategic and will require that we set priorities. A quote from I. King Jordan was shared and paraphrased in the context of change being inevitable in human life …. those who will not step up and create their own path for change are doomed to have that path defined for them by others.
- I think we need to identify more opportunities for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and to make NDSD a comprehensive unit for the provision of services.
- The presentation on the history of the NDSD was great. I think that the issue of "least restrictive environment" is central to our planning.
- Overall I think it is going well. We have received a huge amount of information. Now we need to move from information to planning.
- I think we have accomplished more at this meeting than we did at the previous one, and I feel better about that. I'm anxious to move on to the plan.
- I agree that we have a big task. It will be important how we organize the information that we have in a workable way and more toward a plan/model.
- In a blink the remaining 5 months will go by. We have a short amount of time and a lot to do. I hope we will be successful.
- I feel better about this meeting. We did a lot. It seems that we are "waking up" and we have more focus and energy.
- I agree with that comment and think that everyone is becoming more comfortable in sharing.

Working Draft

- This meeting has gone the fastest. It has been interesting and enjoyable. We have begun to identify some of the issues and concerns. Let's go ahead.

Public Input

Several individuals were present off and on throughout the day. As indicated earlier, these individuals assumed the role of "observers" and were not allowed to participate in the Transition Team's discussions. At this point in the day, the two remaining individuals were offered an opportunity to share their input with the Transition Team. Everyone was cautioned that this was not intended to be a discussion opportunity, but the input and comments would be received by the Transition Team, logged in the summary and other documents, and discussed by the Team as they determined appropriate in the process.

Individual #1:

- Throughout the years, how deaf and hard of hearing students are able to engage with Vocational Rehabilitation services has been an issue and at times a difficulty. I support the idea of initiating a process of training VR staff/counselors and continuing to work with them to improve their understanding of deaf culture and needs and their skills in working with deaf and hard of hearing individuals. It would, also, be helpful to have some clarification on their role, service and requirements.
- There is a shortage and need for more ASL teachers. I hope you will consider this in your planning process.
- There is some uncertainty and inconsistency in the acceptance of ASL as a foreign language in the colleges and universities throughout the state. This is another area that the Team should consider addressing.

Individual #2:

This individual shared a very moving and detailed story regarding her struggles in identifying, accessing and securing services for her adopted son. She told the group of his premature birth, his abused and deprived infancy (his mother is developmentally disabled and his father is in prison), and the special needs that he has. She pointed out that:

- Early testing was critical and indentified her son's hearing loss (deaf in both ears), but noted that once a deficit is identified, follow-up services must be available and provided.
- The decision she made for her son to have bi-lateral implant surgery – it was very difficult. After the surgery she discovered that the services available to him in North Dakota were limited, inaccessible and did not compare to those provided in other states (Minnesota).
- It was a struggle to work with her hometown school district to secure services and she has been very disappointed. She noted that special education cannot be equated with deaf education, that there are distinct differences in the skill sets. Also, that claims that the state lacks deaf educators/teachers are inaccurate. There are deaf educators/teachers "out there," but they are most often working in alternate teaching positions. She found that even the services that were provided (40 minutes a day) were extremely limited and required a drive to a larger city to access them.
- Through her own initiatives and personal contacts, some additional education time was arranged to be provided by graduate students at Minot State University, but her local school/special education district will not assist with this program. Additionally she has been very pleased with the skills and professionalism of the individuals who have been providing services to her son.
- The situation has been very frustrating and she compares the process to "running her head into a system wall."
- A visit to Northern Voices in Roseville, MN, impressed her with their program and the services that they would be able to provide for her son. This is not an option because her

Working Draft

son would not be able to handle the residential side of the program at the present time and would need her to be present. She would be required to move there and this is not a possibility for her.

- After touring NDSD she has decided to enroll her 4-year old son there beginning in January of 2010. This will require her to quit her job, leave close family and "home" and move to Devils Lake. At NDSD her son will receive between 4 and 5 hours of deaf education daily. She stresses that this was not a choice; it was the only option available to her. Representatives of her local school/special education district in fact, told her that if their services are not adequate or acceptable … "There's always Devils Lake."
- Minot schools have been providing appropriate deaf education to students for the past 15 to 20 years ("cost effectively") and she wonders why the current situation is actually worse than it was 20 years ago. Additionally, she notes that she lives only 27 miles from a state university that is responsible for providing deaf teacher education and she is not able to get appropriate services (in her home community) for her son.
- The service and philosophy pendulums tend to swing back and forth from one end of a continuum to another, but it is time to provide more direction and focus. That's why many people are counting on the Transition Team and are hopeful for the plan that will be developed.
- Mainstreaming for the sake of mainstreaming is not the least restrictive environment. Care needs to be taken to prepare children (the deaf or hard of hearing student as well as those students who will be classmates) for their involvement. Kids need to remain at home with their family if at all possible. They need preschool services and self-contained classrooms. Families need these services closer to their homes. NDSD is amazing. They can do it, but they need both the permission and the support to make it work.

The observers were thanked for their feedback and assured of the Transition Team's interest in their observations and recommendations.

Adjourn
Participants were thanked for their involvement and investment in the process and the meeting was adjourned by group consensus.

Next Meetings

Planning Team Meeting
Wednesday, December 30, 2009
10:00 a.m. to Noon
Bismarck, ND - face-to-face and conference call.

Transition Team Meeting
Thursday, January 21, 2010
9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Bismarck, ND

Working Draft